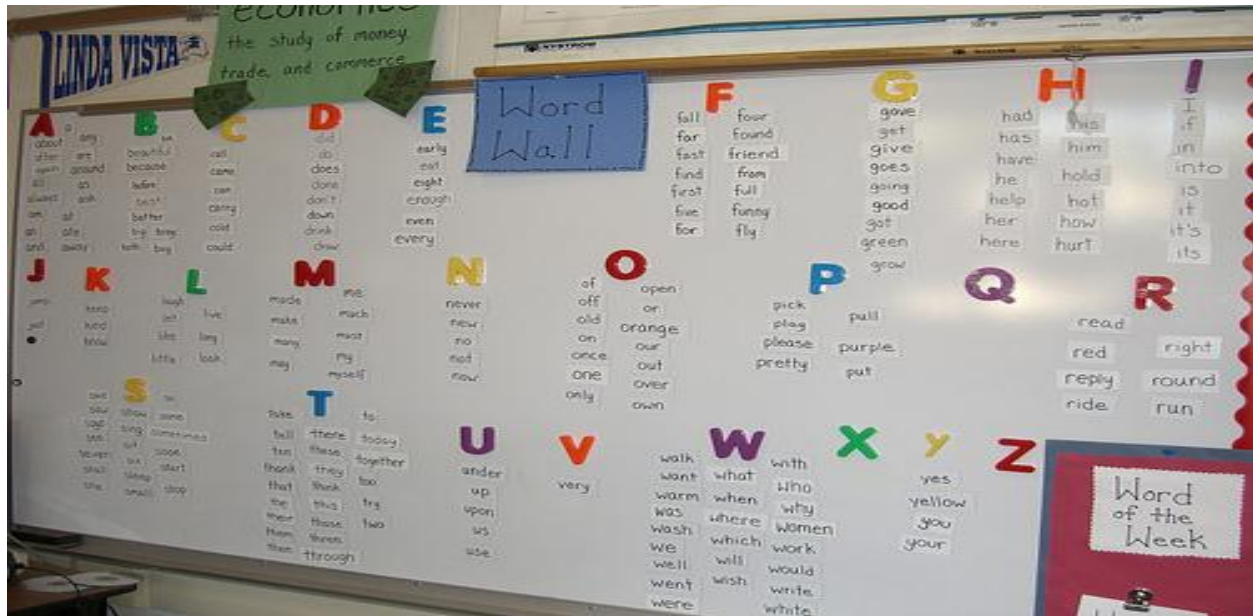


# INTERACTIVE WORD WALLS

## Dynamic Teaching Tools



This newsletter was written to provide educators with research-based information on Word Walls. There are numerous activities that can be done in the classroom and at home. A webliography is listed with links to additional articles and sites devoted to helping with the recommended activities. The bibliography includes a 'Literacy Spotlight' on authors Fountas & Pinnell.

***Khechara Bradford***

*We use words to think;  
the more words  
we know, the finer  
our understanding is  
about the world.*

--Stahl, 1999

## WORD WALLS:

*November, 2010*

## WHY WORD WALLS?

There are many purposes and designs of word walls depending on the grade level, teacher's purpose, or student's interest. The word wall within a classroom is built over time and changes throughout the year according to student's needs. As the year progresses, words that have been mastered by the students can be removed from the wall and new words added.

In *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom* (1998), Gay Su Pinnell and Irene Fountas define a word wall as a "dynamic teaching tool that is devoted to the display and study of words."

Word walls support student's ongoing study of how words work and should be interactive, not simply a display of words. Word walls encourage students to actively learn about words and therefore should be referenced and used often during reading and writing.

This newsletter will focus on research-based tips and activities to help you provide the best instruction to your students to help them learn words meaningfully.



## Tip 1. Make Connections

When a new word is added to the word wall, students should be encouraged to share what they notice about the features of the word including how the word looks, sounds, what it means, and how it is connected to other words. Students can explore the new word using magnetic letters, white boards, letter cards, or other manipulatives.

### Tip 2. Use New Words Frequently!

Continue to reference the word wall and prompt students to use the displayed words while reading and writing. Refer to the word wall throughout the instructional day.

Consider attaching library pockets and inserting multiple copies of the word cards for students to remove, use, and then return. Another option is to create individual copies of the word wall for students.

**Tip 3. Consider Visibility**

Word walls should be visible in a designated section of the classroom. The words should be written on word cards and organized on the word wall in a simple, uncluttered, and cohesive manner.



This teacher used laminated-and-cut-apart alphabet picture cards for word wall letter labels, attached to the board with peel-and-stick magnets.

The words below are written in a format that will help learners understand their meaning.

**Tip 4. Multiple Exposures**

Students have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in long term memory—"this does not mean mere repetition or drill of the word," but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts (Stahl, 2005). Encourage "deep processing" of word meanings by helping children:

- Find synonyms or antonyms for the new word (ex. Which of these words means the opposite of fabulous—excellent, terrible, wonderful?)
- Make up novel sentences using the new word (ex. Maria thought her car was fabulous because it drove so smoothly.)
- Classify the word with other words (ex. Which word goes with fabulous—o.k. or super?)
- Relate the definition of the word to their own experiences (Is it fabulous when you go to see an exciting movie?)



### Tip 5. Play Word Wall Games

## Jeopardy:

The teacher may divide the class into two teams or have the class work together as one team to try and beat their best score. The teacher calls out a point value (100, 200, 300, 400 or 500) then shows the students a word. Points are awarded when students write, draw, or act out a correct definition.

## Tic-Tac-Toe:

Divide the class into partner teams of X's and O's. Each team draws a Tic-Tac-Toe chart. Partner groups take turns choosing a space and reading the word in that space. If the child is able to read the word in the space they select, he may draw an X or O in that space. Older students may play this game by giving word meanings along with reading word wall words.

## Around the World:

Divide the class into small groups sitting together in circles. One student in each group stands behind another student and reads a word or definition of a word. The student who is able to name the word the fastest will continue to move around the circle. The game ends when each team makes it back to their own starting points.

### Other Fun Ideas:

- Picture It (Visualization) and Draw the Image
- Create a Web of Connections to Similar Words
- List Predictions about Word Meaning
- Ask Questions
- Write a Song or Poem about New Words
- Act out a Skit
- Create a Three-Dimensional Representation

### Tip 6. Reinforce Content Objectives Using Word Walls

Front load content vocabulary in science and math through differentiated Word Wall activities. This tool is a great resource for English Language Learners!!



“Seeing vocabulary in rich contexts provided by authentic texts rather than in isolated vocabulary drills produces robust vocabulary learning (NRP 2000). Rich and robust vocabulary instruction (Beck 2002) goes beyond definitional knowledge: it gets the students actively engaged in using and thinking about word meanings and in creating relationships among words” (Diamond and Gutlohn, p.11).



## Tip 7. Teach Tier Two Vocabulary

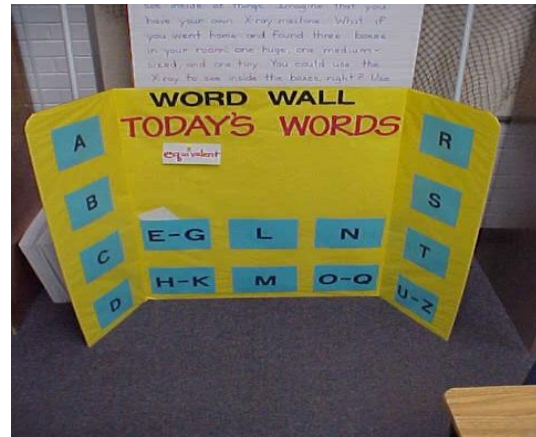
### A Six-Step Sequence (instructional routine)

Adapted from Beck, McKeon & Kucan (2002) by Moore and Lyons (2005) in *New Essentials for Teaching Reading in Pre-K-2*.

1. **Contextualize the word for its role in the story.** Teacher: "In the story, Lisa was *reluctant* to leave the laundromat without Corduroy."
2. **Ask the students to repeat the word so that they can create a phonological representation of it.** Teacher: "Say the word *reluctant* with me."
3. **Explain the meaning of the word.** Teacher: "*Reluctant* means you are not sure you want to do something."
4. **Provide examples in contexts other than the one used in the story.** Teacher: "Someone might be *reluctant* to eat a food that they never had before, or someone might be *reluctant* to ride a roller coaster because it looks scary."
5. **Encourage students to interact with examples or provide their own examples.** Teacher: "Tell about something you would be *reluctant* to do. Try to use *reluctant* when you tell about it. You could start by saying; I would be *reluctant* to \_\_\_\_\_."
6. **Have students say the word again to reinforce its phonological representation.** Teacher: "What's the word we've been talking about?"

## Tip 8. Make it Portable

Project boards or Individual Charts make great word walls that can be used in literacy stations.



## Tip 9. Involve Parents

November is National Family Literacy Month. Celebrate together with these Word Wall ideas:

- Ask each family to send in a word that is meaningful to them and add it to the class Word Wall.
- Talk with parents about creating Word Walls at home. Ask students to bring in pictures of what they've created.
- Place the names of community businesses on the Word Wall and ask parents to come in and share experiences they've had at these places with the class (examples: banks, parks, grocery stores, restaurants). Linking to parents and the community will build connections for students.

## Types of Word Walls

There are many different types of word walls. Possible options are listed below:

<b>Name Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with the first and/or last names of the students.
<b>Theme Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with vocabulary words related to a unit of study in the classroom (energy, community, authors study, etc.).
<b>Compound Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with a collection of compound words, such as rainbow, mailman, or watermelon.
<b>High-Frequency Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with high-frequency words which are appropriate for the grade level.
<b>Vowel Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with words which represent the sounds (short and/or long) for each vowel. (For example, a focus on short vowel sounds could include lick and sip for the short /i/ sound and pen and elephant for the short /e/ sound.)
<b>Spelling Pattern Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with words which represent various spelling patterns appropriate for the grade level. (For example, a focus on the /st/ consonant cluster could include stop and nest.)
<b>Contraction Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with contractions, such as can't, won't, didn't, etc.
<b>Prefix and Suffix Word Wall</b>	A word wall can be created with words which contain specific prefixes and/or suffixes. (For example, a focus on suffixes might include <i>working</i> and <i>quickly</i> , a focus on prefixes might include <i>undone</i> and <i>preview</i> .)



### Tip 10. Use Word Walls to Support Word Choice in Writing

The word wall below was made for overused words. Students write alternative words on cards and put them in the pockets. This is a great tool to use during writing to improve word choice.





## WORD WALLWEBLIOGRAPHY

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/vocabulary>

This website is dedicated to supporting teachers of second language learners. The article, published in 2007, focuses on how teachers can select words to teach English Language Learners. Once appropriate words are selected, building a Word Wall tailored for your students needs will be easy.

<http://classroom.jc-schools.net/read/wordwallbk.pdf>

This site shares an idea for student created Word Wall books. The example shown can be turned into a student journal, part of a word notebook, or duplicated on half-sheets of paper.

<http://www.teachnet.com/lesson/langarts/wordwall062599.html>

Practical Word Wall ideas for Kindergarten- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers.

<http://www.pre-kpages.com/wordwall/>


This site is dedicated to pre-k teachers and includes ideas for using interactive Word Walls with preschoolers. The step by step directions help with setting up and developing age appropriate activities. Language development is such an important part of the preschool curriculum and the ideas shared on this site enhance student literacy engagement.

<http://www.teachingfirst.net/wordwall.htm>

This websites includes a great description of interactive word walls and twelve fun activities.

<http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/studentsupport/ese/PDF/MathWordWall.pdf>

This site is a great resource for Math Word Walls. The creative way each of the words are written gives students a great visual support in understanding their meaning. Over thirty picture word cards like the one below are displayed on this site. The ideas displayed can be discussed with your campus Instructional Specialist to determine if they are appropriate for your students.



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## LITERACY SPOTLIGHT----FOUNTAS & PINNELL



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